# THE MONTH

Convent
of the Sacred Heart
Brighton.

# THE MONTH

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

AN

## Illustrated Magazine

OF

## LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

VOL. II.

JANUARY TO JUNE 1865.

LONDON OFFICE:
37 DAVIES STREET,
OXFORD STREET.

DUBLIN OFFICE:
44 MIDDLE ABBEY ST.
SACKVILLE STREET.

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO., STATIONERS' HALL COURT.
BURNS, LAMBERT, AND OATES, 17, 18 PORTMAN ST., W.

# The Dream of Gerontius.

## § 1.

GERONTIUS.

JESU, MARIA—I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now.
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow,—
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)
That I am going, that I am no more.
'Tis this strange innermost abandonment,
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,)
This emptying out of each constituent
And natural force, by which I come to be.
Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
Has never, never come to me before.
'Tis death,—O loving friends, your prayers!—'tis he! . . . .
As though my very being had given way,
As though I was no more a substance now,
And could fall back on nought to be my stay,
(Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole Refuge, Thou,)
And turn no whither, but must needs decay
And drop from out this universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,
That utter nothingness, of which I came:
This is it that has come to pass in me;
O horror! this it is, my dearest, this;
So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength to pray.

ASSISTANTS.

Kyrie eleïson, Christe eleïson, Kyrie eleïson.
Holy Mary, pray for him.
All holy Angels, pray for him.
Choirs of the righteous, pray for him.
Holy Abraham, pray for him.

St. John Baptist, St. Joseph, pray for him.
St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. John,
All Apostles, all Evangelists, pray for him.
All holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for him.
All holy Innocents, pray for him.
All holy Martyrs, all holy Confessors,
All holy Hermits, all holy Virgins,
All ye Saints of God, pray for him.

GERONTIUS.

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play the man;
And through such waning span
Of life and thought as still has to be trod,
Prepare to meet thy God.
And while the storm of that bewilderment
Is for a season spent,
And, ere afresh the ruin on thee fall,
Use well the interval.

ASSISTANTS.

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord.
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him.
From the sins that are past;
From Thy frown and Thine ire;
From the perils of dying;
From any complying
With sin, or denying
His God, or relying
On self, at the last;
From the nethermost fire;
From all that is evil;
From power of the devil;
Thy servant deliver,
For once and for ever.

By Thy birth, and by Thy Cross,
Rescue him from endless loss;
By Thy death and burial,
Save him from a final fall;
By Thy rising from the tomb,
By Thy mounting up above,
By the Spirit's gracious love,
Save him in the day of doom.

GERONTIUS.

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Parce mihi, Domine.
Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly
Manhood taken by the Son.
And I trust and hope most fully
In that manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly
Do to death, as He has died.
Simply to His grace and wholly
Light and life and strength belong,
And I love supremely, solely,
Him the holy, Him the strong.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Parce mihi, Domine.
And I hold in veneration,
For the love of Him alone,
Holy Church, as His creation,
And her teachings, as His own.
And I take with joy whatever
Now besets me, pain or fear,
And with a strong will I sever
All the ties which bind me here.
Adoration aye be given,
With and through the angelic host,
To the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Mortis in discrimine.

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man; as though I bent

Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent;
Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things,
And needs must sink and sink
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.
O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary, pray!
Some angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee
In Thine own agony.....
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me. Mary, pray for me.

ASSISTANTS.

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour,
As of old so many by Thy gracious power:—Amen.
Enoch and Elias from the common doom; Amen.
Noe from the waters in a saving home; Amen.
Abraham from th' abounding guilt of Heathenesse; Amen.
Job from all his multiform and fell distress; Amen.
Isaac, when his father's knife was raised to slay; Amen.
Lot from burning Sodom on its judgment-day; Amen.
Moses from the land of bondage and despair; Amen.
Daniel from the hungry lions in their lair; Amen.
And the children Three amid the furnace-flame; Amen.
Chaste Susanna from the slander and the shame; Amen.
David from Golia and the wrath of Saul; Amen.
And the two Apostles from their prison-thrall; Amen.
Thecla from her torments; Amen:
—so, to show Thy power,
Rescue this Thy servant in his evil hour.

GERONTIUS.

Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep.
The pain has wearied me..... Into Thy hands,
O Lord, into Thy hands.....

THE PRIEST.

Proficiscere, anima Christiana de hoc mundo!
Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!
Go from this world! Go, in the Name of God,
The omnipotent Father, who created thee!
Go, in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Son of the Living God, who bled for thee!
Go, in the Name of th' Holy Spirit, who
Hath been poured out on thee! Go, in the name
Of Angels and Archangels; in the name
Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name
Of Princedoms and of Powers; and in the name
Of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth!
Go, in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets;
And of Apostles and Evangelists,
Of Martyrs and Confessors; in the name
Of holy Monks and Hermits; in the name
Of holy Virgins; and all Saints of God,
Both men and women, go! Go on thy course;
And may thy place to-day be found in peace,
And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount
Of Sion:—through the Same, through Christ, our Lord.

§ 2.

SOUL OF GERONTIUS.

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;
Nor does one moment differ from the next.
I had a dream; yes:—some one softly said
"He's gone;" and then a sigh went round the room.
And then I surely heard a priestly voice
Cry "Subvenite;" and they knelt in prayer.
I seem to hear him still; but thin and low,
And fainter and more faint the accents come,
As at an ever-widening interval.
Ah! whence is this? What is this severance?

This silence pours a solitariness
Into the very essence of my soul;
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
Hath something too of sternness and of pain.
For it drives back my thoughts upon their spring
By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.

Am I alive or dead? I am not dead,
But in the body still; for I possess
A sort of confidence, which clings to me,
That each particular organ holds its place
As heretofore, combining with the rest
Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,
And makes me man; and surely I could move,
Did I but will it, every part of me.
And yet I cannot to my sense bring home,
By very trial, that I have the power.
'Tis strange; I cannot stir a hand or foot,
I cannot make my fingers or my lips
By mutual pressure witness each to each,
Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke
Assure myself I have a body still.
Nor do I know my very attitude,
Nor if I stand, or lie, or sit, or kneel.

So much I know, not knowing how I know,
That the vast universe, where I have dwelt,
Is quitting me, or I am quitting it.
Or I or it is rushing on the wings
Of light or lightning on an onward course,
And we e'en now are million miles apart.
Yet . . is this peremptory severance
Wrought out in lengthening measurements of space,
Which grow and multiply by speed and time?
Or am I traversing infinity
By endless subdivision, hurrying back
From finite towards infinitesimal,
Thus dying out of the expanded world?

Another marvel: some one has me fast
Within his ample palm; 'tis not a grasp

Such as they use on earth, but all around
Over the surface of my subtle being,
As though I were a sphere, and capable
To be accosted thus, a uniform
And gentle pressure tells me I am not
Self-moving, but borne forward on my way.
And hark! I hear a singing; yet in sooth
I cannot of that music rightly say
Whether I hear or touch or taste the tones.
O what a heart-subduing melody!

ANGEL.

My work is done,
My task is o'er,
And so I come,
Taking it home,
For the crown is won.
Alleluia,
For evermore.

My Father gave
In charge to me
This child of earth
E'en from its birth,
To serve and save,
Alleluia,
And saved is he.

This child of clay
To me was given,
To rear and train
By sorrow and pain
In the narrow way,
Alleluia,
From earth to heaven.

SOUL.

It is a member of that family
Of wondrous beings, who, ere the worlds were made,
Millions of ages back, have stood around
The throne of God:—he never has known sin;
But through those cycles all but infinite,
Has had a strong and pure celestial life,

And bore to gaze on th' unveiled face of God,
And drank from the eternal Fount of truth,
And served Him with a keen ecstatic love.
Hark! he begins again.

ANGEL.

O Lord, how wonderful in depth and height,
But most in man, how wonderful Thou art!
With what a love, what soft persuasive might,
Victorious o'er the stubborn fleshly heart,
Thy tale complete of saints Thou dost provide,
To fill the throne which angels lost through pride!

He lay a grovelling babe upon the ground,
Polluted in the blood of his first sire,
With his whole essence shattered and unsound,
And, coiled around his heart, a demon dire,
Which was not of his nature, but had skill
To bind and form his opening mind to ill.

Then was I sent from heaven to set right
The balance in his soul of truth and sin,
And I have waged a long relentless fight,
Resolved that death-environed spirit to win,
Which from its fallen state, when all was lost,
Had been repurchased at so dread a cost.

O what a shifting parti-coloured scene
Of hope and fear, of triumph and dismay,
Of recklessness and penitence, has been
The history of that dreary, lifelong fray!
And O the grace, to nerve him and to lead,
How patient, prompt, and lavish at his need!

O man, strange composite of heaven and earth!
Majesty dwarfed to baseness! fragrant flower
Running to poisonous seed! and seeming worth
Cloking corruption! weakness mastering power!
Who never art so near to crime and shame,
As when thou hast achieved some deed of name;

How should ethereal natures comprehend
A thing made up of spirit and of clay,

Were we not tasked to nurse it and to tend,
Linked one to one throughout its mortal day?
More than the Seraph in his height of place,
The Angel-guardian knows and loves the ransomed race.

SOUL.

Now know I surely that I am at length
Out of the body: had I part with earth,
I never could have drunk those accents in,
And not have worshipped as a god the voice
That was so musical; but now I am
So whole of heart, so calm, so self-possessed,
With such a full content, and with a sense
So apprehensive and discriminant,
As no temptation can intoxicate.
Nor have I even terror at the thought
That I am clasped by such a saintliness.

ANGEL.

All praise to Him, at whose sublime decree
The last are first, the first become the last;
By whom the suppliant prisoner is set free,
By whom proud first-borns from their thrones are cast;
Who raises Mary to be Queen of heaven,
While Lucifer is left, condemned and unforgiven.

§ 3.

SOUL.

I will address him. Mighty one, my Lord,
My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

ANGEL.

All hail, my child!
My child and brother, hail! what wouldest thou?

SOUL.

I would have nothing but to speak with thee
For speaking's sake. I wish to hold with thee
Conscious communion; though I fain would know
A maze of things, were it but meet to ask,
And not a curiousness.

ANGEL.

You cannot now
Cherish a wish which ought not to be wished.

SOUL.

Then I will speak. I ever had believed
That on the moment when the struggling soul
Quitted its mortal case, forthwith it fell
Under the awful Presence of its God,
There to be judged and sent to its own place.
What lets me now from going to my Lord?

ANGEL.

Thou art not let; but with extremest speed
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge:
For scarcely art thou disembodied yet.
Divide a moment, as men measure time,
Into its million-million-millionth part,
Yet even less than that the interval
Since thou didst leave the body; and the priest
Cried "Subvenite," and they fell to prayer;
Nay, scarcely yet have they begun to pray.

For spirits and men by different standards mete
The less and greater in the flow of time.
By sun and moon, primeval ordinances—
By stars which rise and set harmoniously—
By the recurring seasons, and the swing,
This way and that, of the suspended rod
Precise and punctual, men divide the hours,
Equal, continuous, for their common use.
Not so with us in th' immaterial world;
But intervals in their succession
Are measured by the living thought alone,
And grow or wane with its intensity.
And time is not a common property;
But what is long is short, and swift is slow,
And near is distant, as received and grasped
By this mind and by that, and every one
Is standard of his own chronology.
And memory lacks its natural resting-points,
Of years, and centuries, and periods.

It is thy very energy of thought
Which keeps thee from thy God.

SOUL.

Dear Angel, say,
Why have I now no fear at meeting Him?
Along my earthly life, the thought of death
And judgment was to me most terrible.
I had it aye before me, and I saw
The Judge severe e'en in the Crucifix.
Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;
And at this balance of my destiny,
Now close upon me, I can forward look
With a serenest joy.

ANGEL.

It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear.
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee the bitterness of death is passed.
Also, because already in thy soul
The judgment is begun. That day of doom,
One and the same for the collected world—
That solemn consummation for all flesh,
Is, in the case of each, anticipate
Upon his death; and, as the last great day
In the particular judgment is rehearsed,
So now too, ere thou comest to the throne,
A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heaven begun.

§ 4.

SOUL.

But hark! upon my sense
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would make me fear,
Could I be frighted.

J. H. N.

(To be continued.)

# The Dream of Gerontius.

(Concluded.)

§ 4.

SOUL.

But hark! upon my sense
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would make me fear,
Could I be frighted.

ANGEL.

We are now arrived
Close on the judgment-court; that sullen howl
Is from the demons who assemble there.
It is the middle region, where of old
Satan appeared among the sons of God,
To cast his jibes and scoffs at holy Job.
So now his legions throng the vestibule,
Hungry and wild, to claim their property,
And gather souls for hell. Hist to their cry.

SOUL.

How sour and how uncouth a dissonance!

DEMONS.

Low-born clods
Of brute earth,
To become gods,
By a new birth,
And a score of merits,
As if ought
Could stand in place
Of the high thought,
And the glance of fire
Of the great spirits,
The powers blest,
The Lords by right,
The primal owners
Of the proud dwelling
And realm of light,
Dispossessed,
Aside thrust,
Chucked down,
By the sheer might
Of a despot's will,

Of a tyrant's frown,
Who after expelling Their hosts, gave,
Triumphant still,
And still unjust,
Each forfeit crown
To psalm-droners
And canting groaners,
To every slave,
And pious cheat,
And crawling knave,
Who licked the dust
Under his feet.

ANGEL.

It is the restless panting of their being;
Like beasts of prey, who, caged within their bars,
In a deep hideous purring have their life,
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

DEMONS.

The mind bold
And independent,
The purpose free,
So we are told,
Must not think
To have the ascendant. What's a saint?
One whose breath Doth the air taint
Before his death; A bundle of bones,
Which fools adore, Ha! ha!
When life is o'er,
Which rattle and stink,
E'en in the flesh. We cry his pardon!
No flesh hath he;
Ha! ha! For it hath died,
'Tis crucified
Day by day,
Afresh, afresh, Ha! ha!
That holy clay,
Ha! ha!
And such fudge,
As priestlings prate, Is his guerdon
Before the Judge,
And pleads and atones
For spite and grudge,

And bigot mood,
And envy and hate And greed of blood.

SOUL.

How impotent they are! and yet on earth
They have repute for wondrous power and skill;
And books describe, how that the very face
Of th' Evil One, if seen, would have a force
To freeze the very blood, and choke the life
Of him who saw it.

ANGEL.

In thy trial-state
Thou hadst a traitor nestling close at home,
Connatural, who with the powers of hell
Was leagued, and of thy senses kept the keys,
And to that deadliest foe unlocked thy heart.
And therefore is it, in respect of man,
Those fallen ones show so majestical.
But, when some child of grace, angel or saint,
Pure and upright in his integrity
Of nature, meets the demons on their raid,
They scud away as cowards from the fight.
Nay, oft hath holy hermit in his cell,
Not yet disburdened of mortality,
Mocked at their threats and warlike overtures;
Or, dying, when they swarmed, like flies, around,
Defied them, and departed to his Judge.

—DEMONS.

Virtue and vice, A knave's pretence.
'Tis all the same; Ha! ha! Dread of hell-fire,
Of the venomous flame, A coward's plea.
Give him his price, Saint though he be, Ha! ha!
From shrewd good sense He'll slave for hire;
Ha! ha! And does but aspire
To the heaven above
With sordid aim, Not from love. Ha! ha!

SOUL.

I see not those false spirits; shall I see
My dearest Master, when I reach His throne?
Or hear, at least, His awful judgment-word
With personal intonation, as I now

Hear thee, not see thee, Angel? Hitherto
All has been darkness since I left the earth;
Shall I remain thus sight-bereft all through
My penance-time? if so, how comes it then
That I have hearing still, and taste, and touch,
Yet not a glimmer of that princely sense
Which binds ideas in one, and makes them live?

ANGEL.

Nor touch, nor taste, nor hearing hast thou now;
Thou livest in a world of signs and types,
The presentations of most holy truths,
Living and strong, which now encompass thee.
A disembodied soul, thou hast by right
No converse with aught else beside thyself;
But, lest so stern a solitude should load
And break thy being, in mercy are vouchsafed
Some lower measures of perception,
Which seem to thee, as though through channels brought,
Through ear, or nerves, or palate, which are gone.
And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams,
Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical;
For the belongings of thy present state,
Save through such symbols, come not home to thee.
And thus thou tell'st of space and time and size,
Of fragrant, solid, bitter, musical,
Of fire, and of refreshment after fire;
As (let me use similitude of earth,
To aid thee in the knowledge thou dost ask)—
As ice which blisters may be said to burn.
Nor hast thou now extension, with its parts
Correlative,—long habit cozens thee,—
Nor power to move thyself, nor limbs to move.
Hast thou not heard of those, who after loss
Of hand or foot, still cried that they had pains
In hand or foot, as though they had it still?
So is it now with thee, who hast not lost
Thy hand or foot, but all which made up man.
So will it be, until the joyous day
Of resurrection, when thou wilt regain
All thou hast lost, new-made and glorified.—
—How, even now, the consummated Saints
See God in heaven, I may not explicate:—

Meanwhile let it suffice thee to possess
Such means of converse as are granted thee,
Though till the Beatific Vision thou art blind;
For e'en thy purgatory, which comes like fire,
Is fire without its light.

SOUL.

His will be done!
I am not worthy e'er to see again
The face of day; far less His countenance,
Who is the very sun. Natheless, in life,
When I looked forward to my purgatory,
It ever was my solace to believe,
That, ere I plunged into th' avenging flame,
I had one sight of Him to strengthen me.

ANGEL.

Nor rash nor vain is that presentiment;
Yes,—for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord.
Thus will it be: what time thou art arraigned
Before the dread tribunal, and thy lot
Is cast for ever, should it be to sit
On His right hand among His pure elect,
Then sight, or that which to the soul is sight,
As by a lightning-flash, will come to thee,
And thou shalt see, amid the dark profound,
Whom thy soul loveth, and would fain approach,
One moment; but thou knowest not, my child,
What thou dost ask: that sight of the Most Fair
Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.

SOUL.

Thou speakest darkly, Angel; and an awe
Falls on me, and a fear lest I be rash.

ANGEL.

There was a mortal, who is now above
In the mid glory: he, when near to die,
Was given communion with the Crucified,—
Such, that the Master's very wounds were stamped
Upon his flesh; and, from the agony
Which thrilled through body and soul in that embrace,
Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love
Doth burn, ere it transform. . . .

§ 5.

. . . Hark to those sounds!
They come of tender beings angelical,
Least and most childlike of the sons of God.

First Choir of Angelicals.

Praise to the Holiest in the height, And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful; Most sure in all His ways!

To us His elder race He gave To battle and to win,
Without the chastisement of pain, Without the soil of sin.

The younger son He willed to be A marvel in his birth:
Spirit and flesh his parents were; His home was heaven and earth.

The Eternal blessed His child, and armed, And sent him hence afar,
To serve as champion in the field Of elemental war.

To be His Vice-roy in the world Of matter, and of sense;
Upon the frontier, towards the foe, A resolute defence.

Angel.

We now have passed the gate, and are within
The House of Judgment; and whereas on earth
Temples and palaces are formed of parts
Costly and rare, but all material,
So in the world of spirits nought is found,
To mould withal and form into a whole,
But what is immaterial; and thus
The smallest portions of this edifice,
Cornice, or frieze, or balustrade, or stair,
The very pavement is made up of life—
Of holy, blessed, and immortal beings,
Who hymn their Maker's praise continually.

Second Choir of Angelicals.

Praise to the Holiest in the height, And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful; Most sure in all His ways!

Woe to thee, man! for he was found A recreant in the fight;
And lost his heritage of heaven, And fellowship with light.

Above him now the angry sky, Around the tempest's din;
Who once had angels for his friends, Has but the brutes for kin.

O man! a savage kindred they:
He scaled the seaside cave, and clomb
To flee that monster brood
The giants of the wood.

With now a fear, and now a hope,
From youth to old, from sire to son,
With aids which chance supplied,
He lived, and toiled, and died.

He dreed his penance age by age;
Slowly to doff his savage garb,
And step by step began
And be again a man.

And quickened by the Almighty's breath,
And taught by Angel-visitings,
And chastened by His rod,
At length he sought his God;

And learned to call upon His Name,
A household and a fatherland,
And in His faith create
A city and a state.

Glory to Him who from the mire,
Elaborated into life
In patient length of days,
A people to His praise!

SOUL.

The sound is like the rushing of the wind—
The summer wind—among the lofty pines;
Swelling and dying, echoing round about,
Now here, now distant, wild, and beautiful;
While, scattered from the branches it has stirred,
Descend ecstatic odours.

THIRD CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
In all His words most wonderful;
And in the depth be praise:
Most sure in all His ways!

The Angels, as beseemingly
At once were tried and perfected,
To spirit-kind was given,
And took their seats in heaven.

For them no twilight or eclipse;
'Twas hopeless, all-ingulfing night,
No growth and no decay:
Or beatific day.

But to the younger race there rose
And slowly, surely, gracefully,
A hope upon its fall;
The morning dawned on all.

And ages, opening out, divide
And from the hard and sullen mass
The precious and the base,
Mature the heirs of grace.

O man! albeit the quickening ray,
Makes him at length what once he was,
Lit from his second birth,
And heaven grows out of earth;

Yet still between that earth and heaven—
His journey and his goal—
A double agony awaits
His body and his soul.

A double debt he has to pay—
The forfeit of his sins:
The chill of death is past, and now
The penance-fire begins.

Glory to Him, who evermore
By truth and justice reigns;
Who tears the soul from out its case,
And burns away its stains!

ANGEL.

They sing of thy approaching agony,
Which thou so eagerly didst question of:
It is the face of the Incarnate God
Shall smite thee with that keen and subtle pain;
And yet the memory which it leaves will be
A sovereign febrifuge to heal the wound;
And yet withal it will the wound provoke,
And aggravate and widen it the more.

SOUL.

Thou speakest mysteries; still methinks I know
To disengage the tangle of thy words:
Yet rather would I hear thy angel voice,
Than for myself be thy interpreter.

ANGEL.

When then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,
And feel as though thou couldest but pity Him,
That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself
At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned,
As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight;
And yet wilt have a longing aye to dwell

Within the beauty of His countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.

SOUL.

My soul is in my hand: I have no fear,—
In His dear might prepared for weal or woe.
But hark! a deep, mysterious harmony:
It floods me, like the deep and solemn sound
Of many waters.

ANGEL.

We have gained the stairs
Which rise towards the Presence-chamber; there
A band of mighty Angels keep the way
On either side, and hymn the Incarnate God.

ANGELS OF THE SACRED STAIR.

Father, whose goodness none can know, but they
Who see Thee face to face,
By man hath come the infinite display
Of Thine all-loving grace;
But fallen man—the creature of a day—
Skills not that love to trace.
It needs, to tell the triumph Thou hast wrought,
An Angel's deathless fire, an Angel's reach of thought.

It needs that very Angel, who with awe
Amid the garden shade,
The great Creator in His sickness saw,
Soothed by a creature's aid,
And agonised, as victim of the Law
Which He Himself had made;
For who can praise Him in His depth and height,
But he who saw Him reel in that victorious fight?

SOUL.

Hark! for the lintels of the presence-gate
Are vibrating and echoing back the strain.

FOURTH CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
Most sure in all His ways!

The foe blasphemed the Holy Lord,
As if He reckoned ill,
In that He placed His puppet man
The frontier place to fill.

For, even in his best estate,
With amplest gifts endued,
A sorry sentinel was he,
A being of flesh and blood.

As though a thing, who for his help
Must needs possess a wife,
Could cope with those proud rebel hosts,
Who had angelic life.

And when, by blandishment of Eve,
That earth-born Adam fell,
He shrieked in triumph, and he cried,
"A sorry sentinel.

The Maker by His word is bound,
Escape or cure is none;
He must abandon to his doom,
And slay His darling Son."

ANGEL.

And now the threshold, as we traverse it,
Utters aloud its glad responsive chant.

FIFTH CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
Most sure in all His ways!

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's Presence and His very Self,
And Essence all-divine.

O generous love! that He who smote
In man for man the foe,
The double agony in man
For man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren and inspire
To suffer and to die.

§ 6.

ANGEL.

Thy judgment now is near, for we are come
Into the veiled presence of our God.

SOUL.

I hear the voices that I left on earth.

ANGEL.

It is the voice of friends around thy bed,
Who say the "Subvenite" with the priest.
Hither the echoes come; before the Throne
Stands the great Angel of the Agony,
The same who strengthened Him, what time He knelt
Lone in the garden shade, bedewed with blood.
That Angel best can plead with Him for all
Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.

ANGEL OF THE AGONY.

Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee;
Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened Thee;
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrilled in Thee;
Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled Thee;
Jesu! by that sense of guilt which stifled Thee;
Jesu! by that innocence which girdled Thee;
Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in Thee;
Jesu! by that Godhead which was one with Thee;
Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee,
Who in prison, calm and patient, wait for Thee;
Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come to Thee,
To that glorious Home, where they shall ever gaze on Thee.

SOUL.

I go before my Judge. Ah! . . . .

ANGEL.

. . . . Praise to His Name!
The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
And, with the intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,

Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
And scorched, and shrivelled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful Throne.
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.

SOUL.

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn,—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possest
Of its Sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:—
Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.

§ 7.

ANGEL.

Now let the golden prison ope its gates,
Making sweet music, as each fold revolves
Upon its ready hinge. And ye, great powers,
Angels of Purgatory, receive from me
My charge, a precious soul, until the day,
When, from all bond and forfeiture released,
I shall reclaim it for the courts of light.

SOULS IN PURGATORY.

1. Lord, Thou hast been our refuge: in every generation;
2. Before the hills were born, and the world was: from age to age
Thou art God.
3. Bring us not, Lord, very low: for Thou hast said, Come back
again, ye sons of Adam.

4. A thousand years before Thine eyes are but as yesterday: and as a watch of the night which is come and gone.
5. Though the grass spring up in the morning; yet in the evening it shall shrivel up and die.
6. Thus we fail in Thine anger; and in Thy wrath are we troubled.
7. Thou hast set our sins in Thy sight: and our round of days in the light of Thy countenance.
8. Come back, O Lord! how long? and be entreated for Thy servants.
9. In Thy morning we shall be filled with Thy mercy: we shall rejoice and be in pleasure all our days.
10. We shall be glad according to the days of our humiliation; and the years in which we have seen evil.
11. Look, O Lord, upon Thy servants and on Thy work: and direct their children.
12. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and the work of our hands direct Thou it.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

ANGEL.

Softly and gently, dearest, sweetest soul,
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And, o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

J. H. N.

The Month.

Jan. - June, 1865.

AP
5
.M6
V.II